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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ISSUES FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES FOR TWO WATER BODIES

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has issued fish consumption advisories for Harrison and Chickahominy lakes. The advisories follow test results conducted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) that indicate levels of mercury in certain fish exceed the amount considered safe by VDH for long-term human consumption.

“Fish is an excellent source of protein and an important part of a balanced diet. VDH issues fish consumption advisories to minimize potential adverse health effects of long-term exposure to mercury,” said Ram Tripathi, Ph.D., toxicologist in VDH’s Division of Public Health Toxicology.

The fish consumption advisories are as follows:

- Harrison Lake (entire lake) in Charles City County: No more than two eight-ounce meals of redear sunfish, largemouth bass, chain pickerel, or bowfin should be consumed per month.
- Chickahominy Lake (entire lake), in Charles City and New Kent counties: No more than two eight-ounce meals of largemouth bass, chain pickerel, or bowfin should be consumed per month.

“Mercury primarily affects the nervous system,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. “Exposure to mercury is a significant health concern for children and unborn babies, because their nervous systems are still developing.”

Women who are pregnant or who may soon become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children should not eat fish from these advisory areas to avoid ingesting mercury.

Mercury concentrates in the fish muscle and is not eliminated by cleaning or cooking. Mercury builds up in fish tissue to levels that are many times greater than levels in the surrounding water. Recreational use of water in these lakes does not pose any risk of exposure to mercury.

For more information on current fish consumption advisories in Virginia and a fact sheet with answers to frequently asked questions on fish consumption advisories, visit VDH’s Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov and click on Fish Consumption Advisories.

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